

FACT SHEET
BIOLOGICAL ASSESSEMENT
NOVEMBER 2003

New information developed since the preparation of the 2000 Biological Opinion:

- Corps engineering studies demonstrate the recommended Gavins Point Dam changes will not achieve the desired biological attributes.
- Reservoir tern and plover habitat computer model – Shows a 25% increase in habitat in the reservoirs and a 16% increase along the river stretches.
- Historic tern and plover mortality report – Corps operations were responsible for the loss of only 6% of terns and plovers from 1988 to 2003.
- Designation of critical piping plover habitat – Identifies reaches of critical habitat
- National Academies of Science report – Ecosystem restoration is critical to the successful recovery of the listed species.

Elements of the Biological Assessment:

- Permanent flow changes at Gavins Point and Fort Peck dams are not initially included in the proposed action.
- Test of increased spring releases from the Fort Peck powerhouses and spillway.
- Test flows in the fall from Gavins Point and Fort Randall dams.
- Acceleration of acquisition shallow-water habitat for pallid sturgeon and construction sandbar habitat for terns and plovers.
- Greater support to hatchery propagation of pallid sturgeon.
- Strong research, monitoring and evaluation program.
- Adaptive management through the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Program (MRRIP) with stakeholder support and involvement.

Drought Conservation Measures:

- Mar 15 storage less than 54.5 MAF – Transition to minimum navigation flows at 49 MAF
[Currently – Less than 54.5 MAF – Transition to minimum navigation flows that begin at 46 MAF]
- Jul 1 storage less than 57 MAF – Transition to minimum navigation flows at 50.5 MAF
[Currently – Less than 59 MAF – Transition to minimum navigation flows that begin at 50.5 MAF]
- Jul 1 storage less than 51.5 MAF – Stepped approach to season shortening to 6 months that begins at 36.5 MAF
[Currently – Less than 31 MAF – Stepped approach to season shortening to 5.5 months that begins at 25 MAF]

- Mar 15 storage less than 31 MAF – No service to navigation. Secretary of the Army must approve consecutive no-navigation years.
[Currently 21 MAF – No service to navigation]

The November 2003 Biological Assessment and related Missouri River management materials are available at the Northwestern Division website www.nwd.usace.army.mil and the “Hot Topics” section of the Corps’ website www.usace.army.mil.